

REMARKS

In the Official Action dated July 19, 2004, claims 1-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as indefinite. The Examiner indicated that the claims would be allowable if rewritten or amended to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

Initially, Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for his indication of the allowability of claims 1-20, if rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Furthermore, Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for acknowledging the claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. §119, as well as for acknowledging receipt of certified copies of all of the priority documents upon which the claim for foreign priority is based.

Upon entry of the present amendment, Applicants will have replaced claims 1-20 with claims 21-40. In this regard, each of claims 21-40 recites subject matter similar to the subject matter recited in claims 1-20, although the features of claims 21-40 have been revised in a manner that might be considered “broadening” in one or more aspects. In this regard, Applicants note that the “connection pipe” has been cancelled from the independent claims and placed in secondary claims 22, 26, 32 and 36, as the “connection pipe” is not an essential feature of the independent claims. Applicants have also amended the claims to ensure the claims are not interpreted as reciting “means plus function” or “steps of” language.

Additionally, Applicants respectfully submit that each of claims 1-20 is definite under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. In particular, each of the Examiner's objections in the outstanding Official Action has been addressed by the herein-contained amendments. For example, each of independent claims 21 and 31 recites that the "first guide receives the refrigerant from one of the first and second heat exchangers, and... selectively guides the refrigerant to the other of the first and second heat exchangers in a first mode". In the claimed combination that also includes each of the first and second heat exchangers having a first end connecting to respective first ends of first and second pipes, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims would not be read as implying that refrigerant could simultaneously be introduced and discharged through the same pipe. Of course, Applicants respectfully submit that each of the Examiner's objections is fully addressed and overcome by the amended claims. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-20, and an indication of the allowability of each of claims 21-40 in due course.

Applicants have additionally revised several paragraphs of the specification to ensure the description of the features shown in the Figures is accurate and consistent throughout the specification. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to the specification do not add new matter to the application.

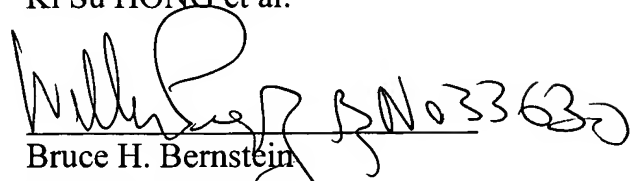
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance, and believe that they have now done so. Applicants have amended the claims to more clearly recited the features of the presently claimed invention. Applicants have also amended the specification to ensure accuracy and consistency in the written description of the Figures. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejection is proper.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto. In particular, no prior art rejection has been asserted in the present application.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this Response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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